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STEVEN GROSS

2

THE BICONDITIONAL DOCTRINE: *CONTRA* KÖLBEL ON A
3 "DOGMA" OF DAVIDSONIAN SEMANTICS

4 ABSTRACT. Should a theory of meaning state what sentences mean, and can a
5 Davidsonian theory of meaning in particular do so? Max Kölbel answers both
6 questions affirmatively. I argue, however, that the phenomena of non-homophony,
7 non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning, semantic mood, and context-sensitivity
8 provide prima facie obstacles for extending Davidsonian truth-theories to yield
9 meaning-stating theorems. Assessing some natural moves in reply requires a more
10 fully developed conception of the task of such theories than Kölbel provides. A more
11 developed conception is also required to defend his positive answer to the first
12 question above. I argue that, however Kölbel might elaborate his position, it can't be
13 by embracing the sort of cognitivist account of Davidsonian semantics to which he
14 sometimes alludes.
15

1. INTRODUCTION

17 Davidson (1984, p. xiv) famously suggested that a truth-theory for a
18 natural language, one that provides interpretive truth-conditions for
19 each of its sentences, can "do duty" for a theory of meaning. Some,
20 however, have felt uncomfortable that truth-theories don't actually
21 *state* what sentences mean. Suppose we distinguish a *theory of*
22 *meaning* and a *meaning-theory*. The former, roughly, is an attempt to
23 illuminate the concept and/or phenomenon of linguistic meaning.
24 The latter is a formalized theory that yields for some particular
25 language theorems stating what each sentence of the language
26 means.¹ Then the basis of their qualms is that a theory of meaning
27 ought to include meaning-theories for natural languages. Critics
28 otherwise impressed by Davidson's truth-theoretic approach have
29 thus attempted to construct meaning-theories on the basis of truth-
30 theories.

31 Max Kölbel, for instance, criticizes as "prima facie absurd" what
32 he labels the *Biconditional Doctrine*: "a theory of meaning for a
33 language does not say what any sentence of that language means . . .
34 [but rather yields theorems that] take the extensional form of material
35 biconditionals of the form 'S is true if and only if p.'" On his view, if



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36 it is possible to construct theories whose theorems *do* state what the
 37 sentences of the language mean, one ought to reject this “dogma of
 38 Davidsonian semantics.” And this indeed is possible, according to
 39 Kölbel: the addition of a simple inference or production rule enables
 40 the generation of theorems that state what the sentences mean, given
 41 the appropriate biconditionals. Kölbel thus maintains that it is both
 42 desirable and possible for a Davidsonian theory of meaning for a
 43 language to state what the sentences of the language mean.²

44 In this paper, I take issue with both these claims: that one *can* state
 45 what the sentences of a natural language mean and that a theory of
 46 meaning *should*. I don’t go so far as to argue that one *can’t* and
 47 *needn’t*. That would depend ultimately on what should count as
 48 successful theorizing about meaning and as stating what a sentence
 49 means – issues not much explored by Kölbel and, in my opinion, not
 50 currently subject to definitive resolution. What I do argue is, first,
 51 that Kölbel hasn’t *shown* us that one can – nor is it obvious that one
 52 can extend his strategy or a variant beyond a restricted range of
 53 sentences; and, second, that by the lights of *one* conception of a
 54 theory of meaning (to which Kölbel himself adverts), there’s reason
 55 to think one doesn’t need meaning-theorems in any event. I base the
 56 first claim on a consideration of context-sensitivity, semantic mood,
 57 non-homophony, and non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning.
 58 Some of the commitments that might enable a meaning-theorist to
 59 accommodate these phenomena would undermine the charge that it’s
 60 *prima facie absurd* that theories of meaning don’t state what sentences
 61 mean. Seeing this thus softens one to the *possibility* that it’s not at all
 62 absurd and so prepares the way for my second claim. Here I argue
 63 that, by the lights of cognitivist neo-Davidsonianism, the Biconditional
 64 Doctrine is an empirical claim – not a dogma– supported by
 65 the apparent explanatory superfluity of meaning-theorems. I develop
 66 these claims after reviewing Kölbel’s discussion.

2. KÖLBEL ON THE BICONDITIONAL DOCTRINE

68 Kölbel (2001, pp. 616–623) crafts his strategy for extending
 69 truth-theories to meaning-theories in light of his understanding of
 70 Davidson’s grounds for accepting the Biconditional Doctrine.
 71 According to the Biconditional Doctrine, says Kölbel (2001, p. 614):

72 the target theorems of a theory of meaning for a language ought to take the
 73 extensional form of material biconditionals of the form ‘S is true if and only if p’, so
 74 that the theorems of a theory of meaning do not *state* what the sentences of the

75 language mean ..., but rather “give the meaning” of sentences and allow us to
76 interpret them if we have further information about these theorems.

77 Why does Davidson hold this? As Kölbel explains, Davidson’s reason
78 is that Tarski-style truth-theories that enable the derivation of such
79 biconditionals (T-sentences) provide a way to satisfy the constraint of
80 compositionality without presupposing a conception of meaning.
81 Theories that would yield theorems of the form ‘S means that p,’ on
82 the other hand, would seem to presuppose a prior account of the logic
83 of intensional contexts and thus in turn a prior conception of
84 meaning: inferences don’t necessarily preserve truth if there is a
85 substitution of expressions differing in *meaning* within an intensional
86 context. Thus, a theory of meaning ought not aim to generate
87 theorems that *state* what a sentence means.³

88 Material biconditionals of the form ‘S is true if and only if p,’
89 however, not only fail to *state* what a sentence means, they can fail to
90 “give” the meaning of a sentence. Since they are extensional,
91 substitution of a sentence agreeing with ‘p’ in truth-value will
92 preserve truth, even if what the substituted sentence says seems rather
93 distantly related to what S means. Davidson and Davidsonians have
94 thus entered various proposals concerning what “further information”
95 must be in place for such material conditionals to be “inter-
96 pretive.” Kölbel mentions in particular two proposals. First, it’s been
97 held that T-sentences “give” the meaning of the target sentence, or
98 are “interpretive,” if and only if they can be derived via a certain
99 canonical procedure. Second, there is the proposal (made explicitly
100 from a cognitivist perspective) that T-sentences are interpretive if
101 and only if they are generated by the production rules (weaker than
102 what classical logic allows) employed by the semantics module.⁴

103 Now, Kölbel argues that, if there’s a compelling proposal
104 concerning this further information, then one can undermine the
105 argument given in support of the Biconditional Doctrine. Given a
106 truth-theory and an account of the further constraints T-sentences
107 must satisfy to be interpretive, it’s easy to extend the truth-theory to
108 yield theorems of the form ‘S means that p’: just add an inference or
109 production rule that says, *if* the further constraints are met, then from
110 ‘S is T if and only if p’ you may infer ‘S means that p.’ It is not
111 necessary to have a more *general* understanding of the logic of
112 intensional contexts in order to validate *this* pattern of inference.

113 More specifically, if being interpretive requires that a T-sentence
114 be canonically derivable, then we should allow the following infer-
115 ence: from something of the form ‘S is T if and only if p’ reached by a



116 canonical derivation, you may infer ‘S means that p.’ If being inter-
 117 preitive requires that a T-sentence be generated by the production
 118 rules of the semantics module, then we should hypothesize that the
 119 semantics module also employs the following production rule: given
 120 ‘S is T if and only if p’ (where ‘p’ does not mention object-language
 121 expressions), infer ‘S means that p.’⁵

122 The claim is that, insofar as we can successfully restrict T-theo-
 123 rems to those that “show” what sentences mean, it’s a simple matter
 124 to derive from them theorems that *state* what they mean – viz.,
 125 theorems of the form ‘S means that p.’ Moreover, *contra* Davidson,
 126 *justifying* the proposed inference in no way requires any further
 127 commitments concerning the logic of intensional contexts. The fact
 128 that the T-theorems are “interpretive,” and thus do indeed “give” the
 129 meaning of the sentences they’re about, guarantees that the meaning-
 130 stating theorems of the form ‘S means that p’ are true, and so
 131 guarantees that the inference is valid – whatever else might be true of
 132 meaning-stating claims and their patterns of entailment.

133 Perhaps, then, although truth-theories can’t quite *do duty* as
 134 theories of meaning, they can do the heavy lifting: once one’s got an
 135 interpretive truth-theory, getting a meaning-theory seems a piece of
 136 cake. Theories of meaning – Davidsonian theories of meaning in
 137 particular – thus can and should include meaning-theories.

3. CAN A THEORY OF MEANING STATE WHAT SENTENCES MEAN?

139 Kölbel’s discussion proceeds in abstraction from the complexities of
 140 human natural languages. Indeed his sole example of a truth-theorem
 141 is Tarski’s “Snow is white’ is true iff snow is white.’ It’s thus a
 142 question, even assuming his strategy successful for a range of cases,
 143 whether one can extend it to handle natural language sentences more
 144 generally. I argue that it’s at least unclear whether it can accommo-
 145 date context-sensitive sentences, non-declaratives, sentences with
 146 non-homophonic T-theorems, and sentences whose meanings have
 147 non-truth-conditional aspects. If the strategy can’t accommodate
 148 these cases, it applies at best to a subset of sentences (a very small –
 149 perhaps *null* – subset if *none* can be accommodated) and is thus
 150 drained of interest.

151 I argue only that it’s *unclear* whether Kölbel’s strategy can be
 152 extended because it’s unclear what further commitments a meaning-
 153 theorist would be willing to defend, underwritten by what more
 154 developed conception of meaning and of the proper way to theorize

155 about it. In particular, some moves I consider below in response
 156 would undermine Kölbel's charge that it's *prima facie absurd* that a
 157 theory of meaning not state what sentences mean. This section, in
 158 addition to raising questions about what a theory of meaning *can*
 159 accomplish, thus also prepares the way for the succeeding section in
 160 which we consider whether a theory of meaning *should* include
 161 meaning-theorems in any event.

3.1. *Context-sensitivity*

163 Consider first, as a framing device, an argument that one *can't* state
 164 the meaning of context-sensitive sentences and thus can't derive such
 165 statements as theorems. Suppose S is a context-sensitive sentence. A
 166 meaning-theory for a language containing S must yield a theorem of
 167 the form 'S means that p.' But no such theorem can be true. For 'p' is
 168 itself either context-sensitive or context-insensitive. But if 'p' is
 169 context-sensitive, then so is 'S means that p.' So, rather than stating
 170 what S means, 'S means that p,' when it is *itself* considered in
 171 abstraction from a context of utterance, would fail to state *anything*.
 172 What's more, when it *is* considered as uttered in some context, it
 173 would assign different (inaccurate) meanings in different contexts.
 174 The sentence-type 'I am tall' doesn't mean, for example, that *I* am
 175 tall. Suppose, then, that 'p' is context-insensitive. But if 'p' is
 176 context-insensitive, then it determines truth-conditions and so for
 177 that very reason can't state what a context-sensitive sentence means.
 178 The sentence-type 'I am tall' doesn't mean, for example, that there is
 179 a unique speaker, time, and comparison class such that the speaker is
 180 tall at that time relative to that class.

181 If this argument is sound, then one *can't* state what each sentence
 182 of a natural language means and so there can't be a theory yielding
 183 accurate meaning-theorems. In particular, neither Kölbel's strategy
 184 nor any other can provide a way of extending truth-theories into
 185 meaning-theories. But the argument is obviously enthymematic. One
 186 might challenge (albeit at a price) the tacit assumptions that sentences
 187 containing context-sensitive syntactic constituents are themselves
 188 context-sensitive; that a theory of meaning should concern itself with
 189 types rather than tokens; and that 'S means that p' must be the
 190 normal form for stating what sentences mean.

191 **1. Inherited Context-sensitivity and Sententialism.** The framing argu-
 192 ment assumes that, if 'p' is context-sensitive, then so is 'S means that



193 p.' This assumption had better not be based on the claim that an
 194 expression is context-sensitive if it contains a context-sensitive
 195 syntactic constituent: the context-sensitivity of 'it's prime' doesn't
 196 render 'every prime number is such that it's prime' context-sensitive.
 197 But one might plausibly claim that in the case of sentences of the
 198 form 'S means that p' there is nothing to bind or otherwise neutralize
 199 the context-sensitivity present in 'p'.

200 To challenge this claim, one might adapt Davidson's approach to
 201 attitude ascriptions and advance some version of sententialism with
 202 respect to such 'means-that' sentences. Suppose, for example, that the
 203 truth-conditions of *meta-language* sentences of the form 'S means
 204 that p' are given by T-sentences of the form: 'S means that p' is true
 205 iff S same-says 'p'.⁶ There is then a sense in which 'p' isn't semanti-
 206 cally *used* at all in the 'means-that' claim and so cannot transmit its
 207 context-sensitivity to the larger whole in which it syntactically occurs.
 208 This would undermine the charge that, for example, "He is tall"
 209 means that he is tall' (atleast on its sententialist reading) fails to say
 210 anything considered independently of a context and says various
 211 (inaccurate) things when considered as uttered in various contexts.⁷

212 One might object, however, that on a sententialist account one
 213 could know that S means that p (and that this is a meaning-theorem)
 214 without knowing what the target sentence means. For one can know
 215 that two sentences are same-sayers without understanding the
 216 sentences. In effect (runs the objection), a means-that claim so
 217 construed amounts to the claim that S means what 'p' means. Indeed,
 218 truth-theorists often object in just this manner that alternative
 219 approaches to semantic theorizing fail to preserve a connection
 220 between theories of meaning and accounts of semantic competence.⁸

221 A second objection is that, even if one allows that the sentence "I
 222 am tall' means that I am tall' (on its sententialist reading) states what
 223 the sentence-type 'I am tall' means, it's unclear how to *reach* this
 224 claim given a truth-theory. Kölbel's inference rule only helps if the
 225 relevant truth-theorem is "I am tall' is true iff I am tall.' But no
 226 appeal to sententialism can save *this* claim, construed as about the
 227 sentence-type.⁹

228 In fact, because of context-sensitivity, truth-theorists standardly
 229 don't even aim for biconditionals of the form 'S is true iff p.' They
 230 seek rather *conditionalized* or *relativized* T-sentences. The former, for
 231 example, have the form 'For all u, x_1, \dots, x_n , if u is an utterance of S
 232 such that $A(x_1, \dots, x_n)$, then u is true if and only if $B(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ ' – so
 233 that a conditionalized T-theorem for 'He is tall' might look roughly
 234 like this: For all u, x, t, and k, if u is an utterance of 'He is tall' such



235 that x is the contextually relevant male, t is the time of utterance, and
 236 k is the kind of person under discussion, then u is true if and only if x
 237 is tall for a k at t .¹⁰ The second objection still has force, however (the
 238 first too, for that matter): what rule yields meaning-theorems from
 239 such truth-theorems? An inference from ‘For all u, x_1, \dots, x_n , if u is
 240 an utterance of S such that $A(x_1, \dots, x_n)$, then u is true if and only if
 241 $B(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ ’ to ‘ S means that $B(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ ’ would land ‘He is tall’
 242 and ‘She is tall’ with the same meaning. The problem is to restore the
 243 semantic content that parameterization removes from the bicondi-
 244 tional’s right-hand-side without introducing descriptive material that
 245 arguably ought to be absent.

246 If we wish to accommodate context-sensitivity, retaining ‘ S means
 247 that p ’ as the normal form for statements of what sentence-types
 248 mean seems unpromising.

249 **2. Tokens, not Type.** The framing argument assumes that a theory of
 250 meaning concerns itself with expression-types rather than tokens.
 251 When one’s dealing only with context-insensitive expressions, it’s
 252 easy and perhaps harmless to identify the semantic properties of types
 253 and tokens. It then doesn’t matter that the Biconditional Doctrine is
 254 in fact *ambiguous*. But tokens would seem to possess semantic
 255 properties distinct from those of context-sensitive sentence-types. It
 256 matters then about *which* it’s prima facie absurd that a theory of
 257 meaning not state what they mean. How best to disambiguate the
 258 Biconditional Doctrine and Kölbel’s charge depends on what a
 259 theory of meaning is supposed to do. But, if one can argue that a
 260 theory of meaning should concern itself with tokens, one can resist
 261 the framing argument.

262 One still must show, however, *how* to generate meaning-theorems
 263 for sentence-tokens. Suppose we start from conditionalized T-sen-
 264 tences. Suppose further that a plausible premise links the semantic
 265 properties of utterances and sentence-tokens. Then one can “decon-
 266 ditionalize” the conditionalized T-theorem if there are premises
 267 supplying values for the contextual variables on the particular
 268 occasion of utterance – for example, for a particular token of ‘He’s
 269 tall,’ premises stating who the contextually relevant male was, when
 270 the speaker uttered the sentence, and what the contextually relevant
 271 comparison class was. An application of Kölbel’s inference rule then
 272 yields a meaning-theorem.

273 A first problem for this strategy, however, is that it’s unclear that
 274 true premises always result in true meaning-theorems. How one
 275 characterizes the values of the contextual variables doesn’t affect the



276 truth of the deconditionalized T-theorem. But it arguably affects the
 277 truth of the *meaning*-theorem. If neither the speaker nor the hearer
 278 (nor anyone else for that matter) knows that he was Jocasta's son, is
 279 it correct that that token of 'He's tall' *meant that* Jocasta's son is tall
 280 (at that time for that kind)? That depends on the conception of
 281 meaning in play and how the means-that claim itself is construed. If it
 282 does affect the truth of the meaning-theorem, then one must intro-
 283 duce some constraints on acceptable characterizations. But this draws
 284 the meaning-theorist back into the controversies concerning inten-
 285 sional logic that Kölbel claims to avoid.¹¹

286 A second problem is that this strategy requires *extra*-semantic
 287 information. Who in fact talks to whom when is no part of a theory
 288 of meaning. But, without such further information, no meaning-
 289 theorem is forthcoming. On this approach, therefore, the meaning-
 290 theorems are not the product of the theory of meaning *alone*. Thus, it
 291 remains the case that *the theory of meaning* – even with Kölbel's
 292 additional rule – must be deemed by his lights a failure. One might
 293 rejoin that it's the precisely the point of the "tokens, not types" move
 294 to reject conceptions of semantic theorizing that focus on the
 295 more-or-less unchanging properties of types, prescind from the
 296 particulars of conversational contexts. But then let it be clear what
 297 this challenge entails: a radical broadening of the domain of facts a
 298 theory of meaning comprises.¹²

299 Let me turn to an alternative way of implementing the "tokens,
 300 not types" reply, one whose truth-theoretic starting point is not
 301 conditionalized t-sentences. Although parameterizing the contribu-
 302 tion of context is indeed the *standard* strategy for accommodating
 303 context-sensitivity in a truth-theoretic framework, an alternative is
 304 to accommodate object-level context-sensitivity by deploying
 305 *coordinated* context-sensitivity in the meta-language used to state
 306 truth-conditions. For example, instead of aiming for conditionalized
 307 T-theorems, one might aim for context-sensitively characterized
 308 Tarskian T-theorems like "He's tall' is true iff he's tall.' Without
 309 further ado, Kölbel's rule would then yield "He's tall' means that he's
 310 tall.' The framing argument rejects such theorems for *types*, but
 311 doesn't consider them for *tokens*.

312 This strategy – if it could be worked out – avoids the problems
 313 encountered above concerning constraints on acceptable character-
 314 izations of contextual features. But it still brings seemingly extra-
 315 semantic information within the purview of a theory of meaning. In
 316 addition, it brings in tow further controversial commitments of its
 317 own. For example, because it uses context-sensitive expressions in the

318 meta-language, its theorems only express truths when themselves
 319 considered as uttered in certain contexts. Clearly, adopting this
 320 strategy requires quite controversial commitments.¹³

321 Unless some large promissory notes can be cashed, retaining the
 322 normal form 'S means that P' thus seems unpromising for *tokens* too.

323 **3. The Normal form 'S means that p'.** So let's turn to the framing
 324 argument's assumption that theorems stating what sentences mean
 325 must take the form 'S means that p.'¹⁴ Assessing alternatives is dif-
 326 ficult, since it's unclear what constraints a theorem must satisfy in
 327 order to count as stating what a sentence means. But let's consider the
 328 most natural candidate.

329 It's a natural thought that, if, in order to state a context-sensitive
 330 sentence's truth-conditions, we must introduce contextual paramet-
 331 ers, then that's what we must do to state its meaning as well.
 332 Meaning-theorems for context-sensitive sentences might then have
 333 the following normal form: For all x_1, \dots, x_n , if $A(x_1, \dots, x_n)$, then
 334 S means of (x_1, \dots, x_n) that $B(x_1, \dots, x_n)$.¹⁵ The target meaning-
 335 theorem for 'He is tall,' for example, would then be something like:
 336 For all x, t , and k , if x is the contextually relevant male, t the time of
 337 utterance, and k the contextually relevant kind, then 'He is tall'
 338 means of s, t , and k that s is tall at t for a k . Reformulating Kölbel's
 339 rule so as to yield such generalized *de re* meaning-theorems from
 340 relativized T-theorems is a simple matter. Although the quantification
 341 into means-that clauses increases the grade of intensional involve-
 342 ment, one might still hope that endorsing the added rule doesn't
 343 require any *further* insight into the logic of intensional contexts.

344 The problem, however, is that generalized *de re* meaning-theorems
 345 seem *not* to state what sentence-types mean. Rather, they state how
 346 varying conditions – and correlatively varying *rerum* – affect what the
 347 sentence-types mean of those *rerum*. In the sense of meaning in play
 348 here, context-sensitive types – though not ambiguous – are associated
 349 with *multiple* meanings. Consider some sample (instantiated) *de re*
 350 meaning claims. 'He's tall' would mean of Jabbar, a certain time, and
 351 athletes that *he* (Jabbar) is tall for *them then*; while it would mean of
 352 my nephew, a different time, and 5th graders that *he* (my nephew) is
 353 tall for *them then*. 'He's tall' thus means something different of
 354 different *rerum*. But the generalized *de re* meaning-theorem, from
 355 which such *de re* claims are extra-semantically derived,¹⁶ would not
 356 itself *state* that the sentence means these various things. Neither
 357 would it state some one thing the sentence itself means considered



358 independently of any *re*. It thus doesn't seem to state in any sense
359 what the sentence means.

360 It might be objected that I've assumed a particular understanding
361 of the *de re*, according to which the *rerum* themselves enter into the
362 content ascribed in a *de re* ascription. The assumption is in fact not
363 uncommon (cf., e.g., Recanati, 1993) but – be that as it may – it's
364 clear that the meaning-theorist who would defend generalized *de re*
365 meaning-theorems must bear the burden of developing an alternative
366 conception of these *de re* claims. She would again have to enter after
367 all into just the complexities of intensionality that Kölbel hopes his
368 strategy can avoid.

369 It might also be objected that I've unfairly restricted what can
370 count as stating what a sentence means. Why not allow that in some
371 looser sense the generalized *de re* claims state what the sentences
372 mean? A more interesting meaning-theorist, however, will take on the
373 burden of sufficiently clarifying what counts as stating what a sen-
374 tence means, since it is she who wields this as a weapon. In particular,
375 we need enough purchase on the notion to see why (1) generalized *de*
376 *re* meaning-claims count while T-theorems don't, and (2) it's prima
377 facie absurd that a theory of meaning not yield meaning-theorems so
378 construed. It's certainly not enough that generalized *de re* meaning-
379 theorems enable (with some extra-semantic supplementation) the
380 derivation of *de re* meaning-claims, nor that they in some sense
381 “show” what the sentences mean. Neither distinguishes them from
382 T-theorems. To be sure, generalized *de re* meaning-theorems differ
383 from T-theorems – for example, with the former, we have introduced
384 at least *some* intensionality. But why should the absence of
385 intensionality *per se* embarrass a theory of meaning? A meaning-
386 theorist tempted to thus recast her charge of prima facie absurdity
387 owes us some motivation.

388 No doubt there are other ways one might attempt to modify the
389 normal form for meaning-theorems. But pending their development,
390 I claim that we have not yet seen how to modify Kölbel's strategy in
391 this direction.¹⁷

3.2. *Semantic mood, non-homophony, and non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning*

394 I now turn more briefly to three other phenomena an extension of
395 Kölbel's strategy would have to accommodate. It is less clear that
396 these phenomena in the end pose a decisive challenge to the meaning-

397 theorist. But the lack of clarity again results from unclarity as to the
 398 aims and claims of theories of meaning. It's thus worth spelling this
 399 out in anticipation of the next section, if only as a "softening-up"
 400 maneuver.¹⁸

401 **1. Non-declaratives.** Even if Kölbel's strategy works for declarative
 402 sentences, it's not obvious how it – or a variant – could work for *non-*
 403 declaratives. Providing a treatment of such sentences is a task for
 404 truth-theorists as well. But the particular problem for meaning-the-
 405 orists is to extend whatever treatment is offered into something that
 406 can yield a statement of what such sentences *mean*.¹⁹

407 The meaning-theorist's simplest reply is to commit herself to an
 408 approach to semantic moods that assimilates them all to the declar-
 409 ative. Lewis (1970) for example, paraphrases non-declaratives in
 410 terms of declaratives that explicitly state the relevant force with which
 411 the non-declarative is conventionally, if defeasibly, uttered. If non-
 412 declaratives (thus paraphrased) require no special truth-theoretic
 413 treatment, they pose no particular problem for the meaning-theorist
 414 either. But there's a drawback to adopting this reply: assimilationist
 415 approaches face well-known difficulties – for example, handling
 416 embedded non-declaratives.²⁰

417 The standard alternative to assimilation strategies assigns sen-
 418 tences fulfillment conditions. Truth-conditions, on this view, are but
 419 the fulfillment conditions appropriate to declaratives. Interrogatives,
 420 for example, have conditions in which they're *answered*. Thus might
 421 the truth-theorist generalize her approach. It's unclear, however,
 422 how one generates a *meaning*-theory from a fulfillment-theory.
 423 Perhaps 'What time is it?' is answered iff the addressee says what
 424 time it is. But it's not the case that 'What time is it?' *means that* the
 425 person asked says what time it is. The sentence's meaning is not
 426 dependent upon utterances of it receiving answers. Whereas assim-
 427 ilation strategies look unpromising for everyone, the fulfillment
 428 approach thus looks unpromising in particular for the meaning-
 429 theorist.

430 But the meaning-theorist might again object that the normal form
 431 for meaning-theorems needn't be 'S means that p.' Ludwig (1997) for
 432 example, argues that one can turn a fulfillment-theory into a theory
 433 yielding meaning-theorems for declaratives, commands-theorems for
 434 imperatives, and requests-theorems for interrogatives – so that
 435 (roughly) 'What time is it?', for example, requests that the person
 436 asked says what time it is. Whether this move in effect *abandons* the
 437 goal of providing a meaning-theorem for every sentence of the

438 language depends on what one wants meaning-theorems for and thus
 439 what form they can take. The clarificatory burden rests upon the
 440 meaning-theorist. In particular, she must explain what a theory of
 441 meaning lacks that yields “What time is it’ is answered iff the person
 442 asked says what time it is’ but not “What time is it?” requests that the
 443 person asked says what time it is.’ If the meaning-theorist takes this
 444 route, the charge of prima facie absurdity is rapidly drained of
 445 force.²¹

446 **2. Non-homophony.** Kölbel supposes that T-theorems’ being inter-
 447 preitive guarantees the truth of their correlated meaning-theorems and
 448 thus the validity of his proposed rule. When attention is restricted to
 449 homophonic T-theorems (for context-insensitive declaratives), this is
 450 indeed difficult to question – no matter one’s views on meaning and
 451 the logic of intensional contexts. But things are otherwise with the
 452 more typical case of non-homophonic T-theorems. Then it matters
 453 what conception of meaning is at issue. Consider an arguably
 454 neo-Fregean constraint that speakers competent with the target
 455 sentence and with ‘means that’ would assent in favorable conditions
 456 to a true meaning-statement. It’s not just that such speakers might
 457 lack concepts deployed in a non-homophonic T-theorem: even when
 458 they don’t, the relation of these concepts to the target expressions
 459 needn’t be obvious. But then Kölbel’s proposed rule would not
 460 preserve truth.²²

461 The obvious response is to deny that true-meaning statements
 462 need satisfy such a constraint. To my mind, this tack is most
 463 interestingly developed, not by casting the denial as a claim
 464 concerning some pre-theoretic commonsense concept of meaning, but
 465 rather as a clarification of the particular – perhaps technically
 466 regimented – concept of meaning one intends to deploy. Indeed, one
 467 might maintain that its content derives entirely from the T-theorist’s
 468 notion of interpretiveness, however that may be explicated – thus
 469 the guarantee, given an interpretive T-theorem, of the correlated
 470 meaning-theorem’s truth.²³

471 But to the extent that it’s a *theoretical* notion of meaning at issue,
 472 it’s again no longer clear why it’s highly suspect that a theory of
 473 meaning not state what sentences mean – or indeed why it must
 474 *employ* a concept of meaning at all. Science provides many examples
 475 of inquiry fruitfully leaving behind pre-theoretical characterizations
 476 of its object.²⁴ In so defending the validity of Kölbel’s rule as applied
 477 to non-homophonic T-theorems, one thus again undermines the
 478 charge of prima facie absurdity.

479 **3. Non-truth-conditional Aspects of Meaning.** Arguably, there are
 480 aspects of expression meaning that are not even “given” by a truth-
 481 theory. For example, some countenance conventional implicatures
 482 that derive from lexically encoded aspects of meaning but don’t affect
 483 truth-conditions; some maintain that lexical entries contain analytic
 484 “elucidations” that need not show up in a truth-theory; and some
 485 worry how to incorporate something like Fregean “senses” into a
 486 theory of meaning built around truth-theories.²⁵ Truth-theorists
 487 might acknowledge such phenomena by disowning the suggestion
 488 that truth-theories “display” *all* aspects of meaning. A truth-theory
 489 can take a place in a larger account of semantics or semantic
 490 competence, allowing, for instance, that lexical entries contain more
 491 semantic information than what the truth-theory avails itself of. The
 492 problem for *meaning*-theorists, however, is that their theorems, if
 493 true, can seem to claim to capture *all* of what a sentence means: they
 494 seem to state *what* a sentence means, not just one part of it. But if ‘S
 495 is true iff p’ is blind to non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning, then
 496 there’s no guarantee that ‘S means that p’ will express a truth.

497 These phenomena of course pose no threat to Kölbel’s strategy if
 498 the meaning-theorist can either deny – and otherwise explain the
 499 evidence for – the alleged non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning
 500 or show that the relevant information in fact can and should be
 501 captured in the T-theory, whence it can then be passed to meaning-
 502 theorems. Taking on such burdens (with perhaps different tacks for
 503 different cases) is a reasonable response – less radical than other
 504 commitments we have considered. But they remain substantive
 505 commitments.²⁶

506 But there are two responses available to meaning-theorists wary of
 507 being held hostage to these debates. First, they might maintain that
 508 meaning-theorems can be true even if they don’t capture *all* aspects
 509 of a sentence’s meaning. It’s unclear, however, how *partial* statements
 510 of meaning, even if true, can *fully* satisfy the demand for meaning-
 511 theorems. Second, they might maintain that the meaning-theory
 512 employs a restricted technical sense of meaning: meaning-theorems
 513 state what sentences *truth-conditionally* mean. But *theoretical* notions
 514 of meaning, however well-entrenched, must earn their theoretical
 515 keep. It’s not obvious that a theory of meaning, to achieve its ends,
 516 must include statements that split this aspect of meaning off from the
 517 rest. Perhaps theories of *logical inference* have a particular interest in
 518 *truth-conditional* meaning. But a theory of meaning and a theory of
 519 logical inference are not the same thing, even if the latter adverts to

520 the meaning of logical lexemes.²⁷ These two responses thus again
521 render the prima facie absurdity charge less secure.

4. SHOULD A THEORY OF MEANING STATE WHAT SENTENCES MEAN?

523 We've canvassed four phenomena that must be accommodated by
524 attempts to extend a truth-theory for a natural language into a
525 meaning-theory, a theory that states what the sentences of the
526 language mean. In charting various ways of dealing with these
527 problems, we've encountered numerous unclaritys in the character-
528 ization of what's being attempted. Is the concern with all sentences,
529 or just declaratives? Types or tokens? Truth-conditional aspects of
530 meaning, or non-truth-conditional aspects too? A "pre-theoretic"
531 conception of meaning, or not? One can't clarify these matters
532 without clarifying what the aims and claims of a theory of meaning
533 are in the first place. We've noted as well that it's not obvious that all
534 ways of specifying the goals of a theory of meaning naturally support
535 the charge that it's prima facie absurd that a theory of meaning for a
536 language not state what the sentences of the language mean. We now
537 turn more directly to the question whether a theory of meaning *should*
538 state what sentences mean.

539 It's easy enough to advance a conception of the theory of meaning
540 that *does* support Kölbel's charge against the Biconditional Doctrine.
541 According to Ludwig (1997, p. 20) for instance, the goal of a theory
542 of meaning is to "provide, from a specification of the meanings of a
543 finite number of primitive expressions and a finite number of rules, a
544 specification of the meaning of any of the infinite number of sentences
545 of the language." If a "specification of the meaning" of a sentence is a
546 statement of what the sentence means, then a theory of meaning
547 that failed to provide such specifications would trivially fail to satisfy
548 its aims.²⁸ It's a further question, however, whether a theory of
549 meaning – so conceived – is of interest. This is not a question I
550 address here. Rather, my interest is in whether there are *other* projects
551 worthy of the label 'theory of meaning' that are of interest but do *not*
552 support Kölbel's charge.

553 I submit that there is: the cognitivist form of neo-Davidsonianism,
554 according to which human linguistic behavior can be explained in
555 part by the empirical hypothesis that we cognize (in large part tacitly)
556 truth-theories that are causally implicated in our linguistic behavior.
557 Kölbel himself discusses such views in explaining what constraints
558 might render a truth-theory interpretive. As he puts it, leaning on

559 Larson and Segal (1995) “a theory of meaning [on this view] is
 560 supposed to model the knowledge which explains speakers’ linguistic
 561 behavior, that is, it models the ‘semantic module.’” It’s hypothesized
 562 that “humans have a semantic module which can be modeled as a
 563 T-theory, and humans treat the theorems that can be generated by
 564 the theory *as* interpretive.” (Kölbel 2001, pp. 612, 613, respectively)
 565 What makes the extensional theorems interpretive is that the
 566 cognitive states that possess T-theoretic content have certain
 567 functional roles: the theorems are passed on to other modules de-
 568 signed to treat them as interpretive. As far as I can see, there is
 569 nothing in this conception that would support the claim that a lack of
 570 meaning-*stating* theorems would be *prima facie* absurd or highly
 571 suspect.

572 There are two questions we should distinguish here. One is the
 573 question of whether, on the cognitivist neo-Davidsonian project,
 574 meaning-theorems are needed. The second question concerns the
 575 status of the first question. I take it that, absent reason to the contrary,
 576 the status of the first question is empirical: whether an account of
 577 semantic competence need posit tacit knowledge of a theory delivering
 578 meaning-*stating* theorems (or tacit deployment of the concept of
 579 meaning at all) is a question to be answered by continuing naturalistic
 580 investigation into language and our linguistic competence. On the
 581 cognitivist construal, the relevant ‘should’ concerns what one ought to
 582 think given the evidence. Contrast this with Kölbel’s charge that it is a
 583 *dogma* of Davidsonian semantics that a semantic theory should deliver
 584 truth-theorems instead of meaning-theorems.

585 Having clarified its status, let’s return to the first question: is
 586 there empirical reason to hypothesize a theory that yields
 587 meaning-theorems? If the semantics module’s place in a speaker’s
 588 cognitive architecture turns out to be as Larson and Segal hypothe-
 589 size, then it would seem *otiose* to hypothesize that the semantics
 590 module generates meaning-*stating* theorems *in addition* to T-sen-
 591 tences: if the mind *treats* the generated T-sentences as interpretive, it
 592 doesn’t need to be “told” that they are.

593 This is a bit quick. As Larson and Segal note, but don’t pursue, it
 594 could be that the *way* truth-theorems are treated as interpretive
 595 involves a “brute inference” from ‘S is true iff p’ to ‘S means that p,’
 596 an inference just like the one Kölbel suggests. They write (Larson and
 597 Segal, 1995, p. 560, n. 15):

598 Since we know little about the nature of the processes that deploy the T theorems, we
 599 are unable to specify in detail what is involved in their treating the theorems as



600 interpretive. One simple possibility is that the T theorems are fed into a processor
601 that makes the brute inference in (i):

602 (i) S is true iff p .

603 S means that p .

604 The other processors involved in speech, understanding, etc., would receive the
605 outputs of this processor. There are clearly more complex possibilities, however, and
606 we will not speculate on the empirical question of which is ultimately correct.

607 In fact, the difficulties encountered in the previous section provide
608 some reason to doubt this “simple possibility” – at least so
609 formulated. But the crucial point is that alternative hypotheses might
610 address this empirical issue. For example, perhaps truth-theorems –
611 at least Tarskain T-theorems for context-insensitive declaratives – are
612 treated as interpretive in the following manner. In comprehension, a
613 hearer assigns a phonetic form to what she hears. The phonetic form
614 is paired with a syntactic representation. Drawing upon the cognized
615 truth-theory, a T-theorem is generated for that syntactic representa-
616 tion. The right-hand side of the T-theorem is then simply *detached*
617 and passed forward. In this sense it’s treated as interpretive. In
618 production, the generated truth-theorem’s other direction would
619 matter. Starting with a specification of the truth-conditions to be
620 expressed, a T-theorem is generated, from which the syntactic
621 specification of a sentence on the left-hand-side is detached. This
622 syntactic specification is paired with a phonetic form which can then
623 be fed to articulatory systems. This is again *too* simple. Even if
624 meaning-theorems play no role, one still needs to accommodate the
625 apparent complications presented by the phenomena we’ve discussed.
626 But the point remains: if some hypothesis that does *not* advert to
627 meaning-theorems would suffice, then meaning-theorems – whatever
628 form they take – would be explanatorily otiose.

5. CONCLUSION

630 Kölbel has not shown us how to extend Davidsonian theories of
631 meaning in order to generate theorems that state the meanings of
632 context-sensitive sentences. Nor is it clear whether his proposal can
633 be modified in order to do so. A meaning-theorist would likewise
634 have to accommodate various other phenomena. The responses we’ve
635 considered can’t be fully assessed without a clearer conception of

636 what a theory of meaning is supposed to do. Such a conception is also
 637 needed to assess in the first place the claim that theories of meaning
 638 *should* yield meaning-stating theorems. On a cognitivist conception,
 639 whether a theory of meaning for a language should state what its
 640 sentences mean is a broadly empirical question: a negative answer
 641 would thus not be – *contra* Kölbel – prima facie absurd. Indeed, there
 642 is some reason to think that meaning-theorems, from a cognitivist
 643 perspective, would be explanatorily otiose. The Biconditional
 644 Doctrine – not as dogma, but as hypothesis – is not touched by
 645 Kölbel’s considerations.

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NOTES

649 ¹ Cf., e.g., Davies (1981), p. 3. Davies, however, limits a theory of meaning to an
 650 illumination or analysis of the *concept* of meaning.

651 ² Kölbel (2001), p. 614. It’s clear from context that the force of his ‘prima facie’ is
 652 not *merely at first blush*, but *even at first blush*. Kölbel (2001), p. 618, also labels the
 653 Biconditional Doctrine “awkward,” “highly suspect,” “cumbersome,” “unat-
 654 tractive,” and “unnecessary.”

655 In the quote above, I’ve modified Kölbel’s conventions for representing sche-
 656 matic letters. Note that ‘S’ is schematic for a sentence-name. (In examples, I will
 657 for simplicity’s sake supply quote-names rather than syntactic representations.) ‘p’
 658 is schematic for a sentence. (I will assume corner-quotes read where needed.)

659 I’ve also adjusted the reference to dogma from the plural to the singular. The
 660 second dogma of Kölbel’s title, which he rejects as well, is the *truth doctrine*: “the
 661 concept of truth plays a central explanatory role in Davidsonian theories of
 662 meaning for a language.” (614) Kölbel’s positions concerning the two dogmas are
 663 connected in that he claims that, having rejected the first, “it becomes easier” (623)
 664 to reject the second. However, he doesn’t claim – nor does it seem to be the case –
 665 that rejecting the latter *requires* rejecting the former. (The truth doctrine is rejected
 666 on independent Chomskian grounds in Pietroski (2003).) I don’t discuss the truth
 667 doctrine here.

668 Various others have discussed the need for and possibility of meaning-theories.
 669 Within the Davidsonian tradition (see, for example, Davies, 1981; Ludwig, 2002).
 670 Although I key this paper to Kölbel, much of what I will say carries over to these
 671 discussions as well.

672 ³ It’s not obvious why thus adverting to a conception of meaning should be prob-
 673 lematic. Davidsonian theories of meaning aim at least to “give” – and, according
 674 to Kölbel, ought to aim to *state* – the meanings of the sentences of some language.
 675 A worry about circularity would seem only to arise if the goal were rather (or, also)

676 to provide an “analysis” of meaning. Davidson, no doubt, sees his conception of
 677 the form a theory of meaning for a language should take as part of a larger theory
 678 of *meaning*. But it’s not clear that all *Davidsonians* would or should. One’s worries
 679 about the logic of intensional contexts could take other forms, however. For
 680 example, one might want to avoid appeal to an unanalyzed notion of meaning, not
 681 because one saw one’s project as providing an analysis of meaning, but rather
 682 because one finds such notions unacceptably obscure, metaphysically suspect, or
 683 not empirically fruitful. Or, one’s worry might be that we simply lack a sufficient
 684 understanding of the logic of intensional contexts *punkt*.

685 ⁴ Kölbel (2001), p. 617, fn. 6 cites Davies (1981), p. 33, and Peacocke (1976) for the
 686 first proposal, and Larson and Segal (1995), pp. 32–42 for the second.

687 ⁵ The exclusion of mentioned object-level expressions on the biconditional’s right-
 688 hand side blocks inferences to ‘means-that’ claims from such biconditionals as
 689 those of the form “q and r’ is true if and only if ‘q’ is true and ‘r’ is true.” (On the
 690 first proposal, the notion of a canonical proof procedure excludes such cases.)

691 ⁶ Cf. Davidson (1968). Note that I’m deploying ‘same-says’ to denote a relation
 692 among sentence-types rather than utterances. For an example of sententialism with
 693 respect to a meaning-claim, see Ludwig and Ray (1998), p. 146.

694 ⁷ Sententialists needn’t follow Davidson in advancing a *paratactic* treatment. (Cf.
 695 Larson and Segal, 1995), p. 423. It’s thus not the case that these ‘means-that’
 696 sentences would remain context-sensitive on account of a demonstrative. One
 697 might suggest, however, that they remain context-sensitive for another reason.
 698 Sententialists about attitude ascriptions tend to allow, or even emphasize, that
 699 what satisfies ‘same-saying’ contextually varies. The claim is that at issue really is
 700 similarly-saying according to contextually varying standards. (Cappelen and
 701 Lepore, 1997, e.g., argue on such grounds against the claim that, if a speaker, in
 702 uttering S, says that p, then the content of S – assigned on their view by a theory of
 703 meaning – is p.) However, insofar as a meaning-theorist is concerned with a
 704 technical sense of ‘meaning’ and its cognates, she might maintain that, although
 705 ‘means’ may express various similarly-saying relations, depending on the context,
 706 we are *here* using ‘means’ in a *particular* conversational context, one in which we’re
 707 theorizing about meaning. We might even introduce a new context-*insensitive* term
 708 – ‘means*’ – to express the relation context-sensitive ‘means’ expresses in such
 709 distinguished theoretical contexts.

710 ⁸ See, e.g., Lepore (1983) and Higginbotham (1988, 1999). Indeed, this objection has
 711 been aimed more specifically at sententialism about attitude ascriptions. (See
 712 Schiffer 1987), p. 133. But, in that case, one objects to a proposed semantic
 713 treatment of an object-level sentence, whereas in our case the objection is raised
 714 about the proper construal of terms deployed in the meta-language.

715 It must be noted, however, that not everyone accepts the conception of a theory
 716 of meaning that underwrites such objections. Soames (1989) for example,
 717 maintains that a semantic theory needn’t play a role in an account of semantic
 718 competence.

719 Finally, I should note that Ludwig and Ray (1998) reply to this first objection,
 720 as raised against sententialism generally, by allowing that ‘p’ is both mentioned
 721 and used. If ‘p’ can be a context-sensitive sentence, however, the framing argu-
 722 ment’s unwanted consequences then follow. We’ll see below that Ludwig (2002)
 723 would respond by altering the normal form for meaning-statements in a way that
 724 precludes context-sensitivity on the right-hand side.



- 725 ⁹ We consider presently such T-sentences construed as about sentence-*tokens*.
 726 ¹⁰ Cf., e.g., Higginbotham (1988). Relativized T-sentences (cf., e.g., Larson and
 727 Segal, 1995) have the form ‘For all x_1, \dots, x_n , if $A(x_1, \dots, x_n)$, then S is true
 728 relative to (x_1, \dots, x_n) if and only if $B(x_1, \dots, x_n)$.’ (Nothing turns on my choice
 729 of ‘relative to’ as opposed to ‘at’ or ‘with respect to,’ etc.) Regarding the example
 730 above, I should note that Cappelen and Lepore (2003) reject the claim that ‘tall’ is
 731 context-sensitive.
 732 Since the Biconditional Doctrine, as Kölbel characterizes it, specifies Tarskian
 733 biconditionals as the normal form, Davidsonians thus do indeed have reason to
 734 reject the Biconditional Doctrine after all – albeit a reason distinct from his. But no
 735 doubt Kölbel would readily acknowledge that such Davidsonians would prefer a
 736 reformulation in terms of conditionalized or relativized normal forms. Kölbel’s
 737 characterization would be retained, however, by those mentioned below who
 738 adopt the alternative (non-standard) attempt to accommodate context-sensitivity
 739 in a truth-theory.
 740 ¹¹ Cf. my remarks below on *de re* meaning-claims.
 741 ¹² It might be thought that one could avoid broadening the theory of meaning to
 742 include facts concerning *actual* conversational contexts by instead including a
 743 specification of all *possible* conversational contexts. Then a theory of meaning
 744 could state what all possible tokens mean without adverting to such facts as that
 745 Billy was talking to Mary on such-and-such date. This suggestion is problematic
 746 for at least two reasons. First, it’s unclear that one could recursively characterize
 747 all possible conversational contexts. (How would one characterize all possible
 748 addressees or all possible pragmatic presupposition sets?) Second, even if there
 749 were the means for characterizing all possible values of contextual variables, it’s
 750 unclear that the characterizations would include characterizations of the right
 751 kind. For example, one can characterize all possible locations according to their
 752 distances along some axes from a distinguished point; but neither the speaker nor
 753 the hearer might be capable of so characterizing the location referred to by ‘here’
 754 on some occasion.
 755 ¹³ In [xxx], I consider at greater length the prospects for accommodating object-level
 756 context-sensitivity by using context-sensitivity in the meta-language. Although the
 757 suggestion must overcome a variety of obstacles – for example, accounting for
 758 comprehension of utterances of context-sensitive sentences entered in a context
 759 other than the hearer’s – it does have resources worth exploring. I distance myself,
 760 however, from the claim that *all* context-sensitivity can be thus accommodated.
 761 (See [xxx], fn. 20.) If it can’t be, then this strategy is only of limited help to the
 762 meaning-theorist.
 763 ¹⁴ Kölbel (2001), p. 618 himself briefly mentions such other possibilities as ‘S’s
 764 content is that p’ and ‘S’s truth-condition is that p,’ though these don’t happen to
 765 help with our current problem. He also (2001), pp. 614, 623, fn. 11 mentions
 766 meaning-theorems of the form ‘S means m,’ where ‘m’ refers to a meaning, and
 767 reports Davidson’s “slingshot” argument against them. For discussion of the
 768 slingshot argument, see Neale (2001).
 769 ¹⁵ Cf. Ludwig (2002).
 770 ¹⁶ Again, such claims are not derivable within the theory of meaning alone, since one
 771 requires the aid of supplementary premises providing the requisite contextual
 772 information. In addition, the requisite further inference rule involves further
 773 commitments concerning the logic of intensional contexts.

- 774 ¹⁷ One might try introducing a rule that takes appropriate outputs of truth-theories
 775 ‘...S...’, whatever more specific form they may have, and yields theorems of the
 776 form ‘The meaning of S is given by the claim that ...S...’ (This move, if otherwise
 777 successful, would accommodate non-declaratives as well.) Such theorems, how-
 778 ever, don’t state what sentences mean. Rather, they state that the T-theorem gives
 779 the meaning of the sentence. Cf. ‘The meaning of S is given by the claim expressed
 780 by the German *wahrheits*-sentence R.’
- 781 Some might also object that these theorems, when taken at face value, refer to or
 782 quantify over intensional entities that Davidsonians have been loathe to admit into
 783 their ontology. I am less inclined to push this particular worry. My [xxx] questions
 784 the move from semantic theorizing to ontological commitment – albeit from a
 785 cognitivist perspective that (as we’ll see) seems not to require meaning-theorems in
 786 any case. Those who *are* inclined to press this objection, however, might suggest
 787 more generally that introducing intensional operators requires willy-nilly positing
 788 intensional entities.
- 789 ¹⁸ One further question I *don’t* press below: why is it only *prima facie* absurd that
 790 what *sentences* mean not be stated by the theory? Is it also *prima facie* absurd that
 791 the meaning of *sub-sentential expressions* is only “shown”? If so, then further rules
 792 are needed to extend a truth-theory into a meaning-theory. It’s not obvious how
 793 this is best done.
- 794 ¹⁹ Kölbel (2001), p. 629, has some brief remarks that are relevant. But they don’t
 795 sharply distinguish force and mood; and his remarks concerning a ‘yes-no’
 796 question do not obviously generalize to other interrogatives.
- 797 ²⁰ Assimilationist accounts also introduce explicit reference to speaker and addressee
 798 as well as an element of context-sensitivity (as in ‘The sentence ‘Where is John?’ is
 799 true iff – or, means that – the speaker of it asks the addressee where John is’). But
 800 none of this is explicitly present in either the non-declarative sentences themselves
 801 or their indirect counterparts. The paratactic account of Davidson (1979) – an-
 802 other assimilationist approach – in addition has difficulties with non-‘yes-no’
 803 questions. Cf. Ludwig (1997) for general discussion.
- 804 A further objection often raised against paraphrase accounts is that they
 805 counter-intuitively maintain that non-declaratives possess *truth*-values. In [cite],
 806 however, I allow that yielding *true* T-theorems might not be among the adequacy
 807 conditions for a T-theory and that indeed it’s perhaps not obligatory that the ‘T’ in
 808 T-theorems be interpreted as a *truth* predicate. These suggestions, however, are
 809 again entered from a cognitivist perspective that does not support the demand for
 810 meaning-theorems. Kölbel (2001), pp. 633–635, also discusses whether ‘T’ need
 811 be interpreted as truth – albeit in light of his criticisms of the Biconditional and
 812 Truth Doctrines.
- 813 ²¹ It’s also reasonable to worry whether, behind the demand for the further theo-
 814 rems, lies a conflation of sentence-meaning and speaker-meaning. But this spec-
 815 ulation needn’t apply in all cases.
- 816 I note also an alternative reply available to the meaning-theorist: perhaps it’s
 817 only *prima facie* absurd that a theory of meaning not include statements of what
 818 *declaratives* mean. But clearly they would need to explain why.
- 819 T-theorems are typically far from homophonic in worked-out semantic propos-
 820 als for natural languages. Kölbel’s example – Tarski’s “‘Snow is white’ is true iff
 821 snow is white’ – notoriously concerns a sentence that illustrates the point. ‘Snow’
 822 occurs here as a mass noun in a generic claim. The proper treatment of both is

- 823 much disputed, but it's unlikely that a successful treatment will yield homophony.
 824 Cf. Pelletier and Schubert (1989) on mass expressions and Carlson and Pelletier
 825 (1995) on generics.
 826 The possible constraint on true meaning-statements is adapted from Frege
 827 (1906), p. 299, on thought-identity.
 828 ²³ About the pretheoretic, commonsense concept of expression meaning, I note only
 829 that, even supposing that there is indeed but one such concept, it's far from
 830 obvious that it is sufficiently determinate either to settle whether it entails the neo-
 831 Fregean constraint or to render the relevant non-homophonic meaning-statements
 832 determinately true or false. The nature of pre-theoretic concepts of meaning
 833 is, however, arguably itself an unobvious empirical matter. Cf. Chomsky (2000),
 834 pp. 172–173 on ethnoscience and the study of folk semantics.
 835 Without further premises, eliminativism doesn't follow from this observation.
 836 ²⁵ On conventional (NB: *not* conversational) implicature, (see Grice, 1975), pp. 41,
 837 46. Standard examples include 'but,' 'still,' and 'in other words.' On elucidations,
 838 (see Higginbotham, 1989). An example (following Hale and Keyser, 1987) is the
 839 hypothesis that it's the lexical entry for 'cut' that contains the information that
 840 cutting involves a linear separation in the material integrity of the thing cut – as
 841 opposed to its being a piece of general knowledge. For truth-theories and Fregean
 842 sense, (see, e.g., Ludlow), 1999, pp. 42–45.
 843 ²⁶ Against conventional implicature (see Bach, 1999) and against analytic elucidations,
 844 (see Fodor, 1998). On incorporating elucidations into truth-theories,
 845 (cf. Ludlow 1999), p. 39, on robust lexical axioms. On incorporating senses,
 846 (see Ludlow, 1999), pp. 42–45. Arguably one could adapt his remarks on senses to
 847 defend as well a requirement that T-theorems display truth-conditions via lexical
 848 items that reproduce the target sentence's conventional implicatures.
 849 ²⁷ Nor should one identify a theory of semantic *competence* and a theory of *infer-*
 850 *ential* competence. Cf. my [xxx].
 851 ²⁸ Ludwig attributes this conception of the aim of a theory of meaning to Davidson.
 852 I don't think this can be supported.

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904 Department of Philosophy
 905 University of Pennsylvania
 906 E-mail: gross2@phil.upenn.edu

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